



Participants in the National Physics Teachers Conference toured the Experimental Breeder Reactor-1 as part of a daylong visit to the INL Site.

## Physics teachers collaborate, learn in Idaho Falls

by Megan Crepeau, *Nuclear Science & Technology Communications*

Physics teachers from across the country gathered in Idaho Falls for six days in July for the 2008 National Physics Teachers Workshop. The INL-sponsored event was meant to emphasize the importance of teaching nuclear science for some of the nation's most influential people – teachers.

"I'm a nuclear engineer today because of my high school physics teacher," said Kathryn McCarthy, INL's deputy associate lab director for Nuclear Science and Technology. "I found that [studying nuclear physics] was a really challenging and exciting and important thing to do ... what you do builds a pipeline for students who will come to the lab."

McCarthy spoke to the 39 participants about the importance of creating a responsible fuel cycle. That concentration on finding green energy solutions was emphasized throughout the week, with lecturers speaking on the positive influence that physics teachers can have.

"We have our work cut out for us, and you guys are on the front lines," said former INL employee Bob Skinner in his introduction to the workshop.

All the participants were kept busy by the many activities hosted by INL, including a full-day tour of the INL Site. There, the teachers learned about the history of atomic energy in eastern Idaho and were treated to rare sights like EBR-1 and Cherenkov radiation, which Maine teacher James Guillemette said was on his list of lifetime goals.

"Going there and seeing just exactly what's going on, it was a great experience," said Hakan Armagan, a physics teacher from Nebraska.

Other activities included a guided tour of the night sky with an introduction to astrophysics from Matthew Brobowski of the University of Maryland; a tour of the Wolverine Creek Wind Farm in Iona; a visit to the Idaho Accelerator Center and a tour of the physics research labs at Idaho State University in Pocatello.

The workshop also included lectures by experts in nuclear engineering from INL and elsewhere. Specialists including INL Deputy Lab Director David Hill and DOE-Idaho Manager Beth Sellers spoke on topics as diverse as nuclear energy in politics, Next Generation Nuclear Plant and the environmental effects of nuclear engineering.

The lectures were tailored to be accessible for the teachers' diverse levels of experience. Some of the attendees taught college-level physics, while others taught at a lower level with little experience in the details of nuclear engineering.

Summer Anderson, a science teacher from Florida, said the workshop was her introduction to nuclear physics.

"This was the first real nuclear training and education I've had," she said. "Now I just have more knowledge of how it works [and] I know more about all types of energy."

Wanda Padula from New York teaches AP Physics. She said the workshop was just the refresher course she needed to emphasize nuclear energy in the classroom.

"It was great to bring my knowledge up to par," she said.

Julie McShea, who teaches earth science and chemistry in California, summed up her experience concisely.

"Outstanding. Didn't waste any of our time. Excellent speakers. Lots of useable information," she said.

The speakers and administrators were just as glad to be there.



***Teachers from all across the country got the chance to discuss pressing issues with their colleagues.***

"We all love it when you guys come to town," Sellers said. "It's so fun to do!"

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